

whose glory requires to be illustrated by the ruin of his creation.

It is quite unnecessary to say, that ^the list of excellent Christian writers would be very considerable. But as to the vast mass of books that would, by the consenting adjudgment of all men of liberal cultivation, remain after this deduction, one cannot help deplored the effect which they must have had on unknown thousands of readers. It would seem beyond all question that books which, though even asserting the essential truths of Christianity, yet utterly preclude the full impression of its character; which exhibit its claims on admiration and affection with insipid feebleness of • sentiment; or which cramp its simple majesty into an artificial form at once distorted and mean ; must be seriously prejudicial to the influence of this sacred subject, though it be admitted that many of them have sometimes imparted a measure both of instruction and of consolation. This they might do, and yet at the same time convey extremely contracted and inadequate ideas of the subject.* There are a great many of them into which an intelligent Christian cannot look without rejoicing that *they* were not the books from which he received his impressions of the glory of his religion. There are many which nothing would induce him, even though he did not materially differ from them in the leading articles of his belief, to put into the hands of an inquiring young person; which he would be sorry and ashamed to see on the table of an infidel; and some of which he regrets to think may still contribute to keep down the standard of religious taste, if I may so express it, among the public instructors of mankind. On the whole it would appear, that a profound veneration for Christianity would induce the wish, that, after a judicious selection of books had

* It is true enough that on every other subject, on which a multitude of books have been written, there must have been many which in a literary sense were bad. But I cannot help thinking that the number coming under this description, bear a brger proportion to the excellent ones in the religious department than any other. One chief cause of this has been, the mistake by which many good men, professionally employed in religion, have deemed their respectable mental competence to the office of public speaking, the proof of an equal competence to a. work which **ia** subjected to much severer literary and intellectual laws.